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KMOV

More than 1,800 veterans in the St. Louis area may have been exposed to potentially life-threatening diseases at the John Cochran VA Hospital.

This is according to Congressman Russ Carnahan's office. Carnahan is demanding an investigation into the report.

The report states veterans who received dental treatment at the hospital from February 1, 2009 to March 11, 2010 may be at risk for contracting HIV and Hepatitis B or C.

Now, Missouri Congressman Todd Akin is raising concerns over the cleaning procedures at the facility. The concerns stem from reports that the tools used for dental care were never properly sanitized.

Earlene Johnson worked in the sterilization department but after she insisted that procedures needed to be changed on sanitation, she was fired and her suggestions were ignored.

In a statement released on Wednesday Akin said, "I cannot believe that the Veterans Administration has failed our St. Louis veterans in such a dramatic and disturbing manner. After putting their lives on the line for our country, veterans deserve the best possible health care."

Akin is also concerned by the fact that the VA discovered this issue in March and did not notify veterans or Congress until June. Akin sent a letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on Tuesday.

The veterans administration is contacting veterans from Missouri and Illinois who received the dental treatment.

Patients can call (888) 374-3046 or (314) 289-7040. The Call Center is open 24 hours/day 7-days per week. The St. Louis VA Medical Center emphasizes that screening is strictly precautionary and does not indicate any patients have contracted an infection.

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